



PGA OF AUSTRIA

The 16th in our series that takes a random look at member PGAs in turn.

Alpine Hopes Soar with New School and New Programme

The eight-year period since the start of the new century has been a time of change, and some little disappointment, for the PGA of Austria... but now, with a re-organised education system firmly in place, it's all systems go to produce a flow of well-trained professionals

Thanks to the work and foresight of a number of dedicated PGA professionals, working closely with the national Federation, the sport is now growing and prospering despite what, at the time, must have seemed to be severe setbacks.

First, though, those disappointments: Until four years ago an ambitious scheme was underway for the PGA to be housed at an extensive office/hotel/golf course project at Schladming.

Sadly this had to be abandoned in 2004 after three years of effort, due to financial and environmental concerns.

Then, in 2007, Jonathan Mannie, The PGAs of Europe director, and Education Committee member, resigned as Austria's Head of Education, after sterling work in that capacity, in order to take on the National Team Coach role vacated by Gordon Manson.

This double blow led to the need for a brand new education structure to be introduced, and this has been achieved in impressive fashion. Now in place is one that offers the distinct promise of it establishing a growing profile on the international scene by producing more and more home-produced, well-qualified professionals.

When Jonathan Mannie moved over into his new role, the PGA decided to split the duties between two excellent candidates in Ralph Hagen and Alex Marx.

"A great deal has happened since then," Ralph explained on their behalf. "First we formed a relationship with the **Golf HAK** in Stegersbach. This is a boarding school located in the south east part of the country. It is a school of economy with a main focus on tourism and golf management.

"It is now our new PGA headquarters where all the seminars, schools and meetings will be

held from now on. The synergetic effect of this co-operation has been great. More than 80 juniors between 14 and 21 are studying there and are trained in golf three times a week. The school is equipped with all the necessary high-tech training facilities.

"There are multimedia rooms, computer rooms, indoor golf for 15 players, gymnasium, video, 3D motion System, Putt Lab, and so on."

The outdoor facilities are located only a kilometre away from the school and they include an excellent driving range for 80 golfers, pitching & putting area, a 45-hole golf course and 5 hole pitch & putt course.

Students of the Golf HAK school can join the PGA education programme in their third year, but only if they can pass the mandatory playing ability test. One year after passing their school leaving examination they can undertake the final phase of the course to become a fully qualified golf professional.

Many tourists visiting Austria take with them either a set of skis or a mental image of Julie Andrews and a certain film of hers. **And, while this will never be superseded by golf tourism, those Alpine slopes become ever more 'alive to the sound of club on ball'.**



How Austria's New Education System Works

- Total education time is reduced from 5 Years to 3 years, making it more compact and with more training days because the course also includes elements of the 'national trainer' scheme, organised by the Austrian Sport Academy and the PGA.
- There will be no qualified assistant status. Students start as a trainee assistant and after the first and the second year he or she is tested. The student has one opportunity to re-sit the year.
- After passing the tests each year, the trainee is given a theme for a diploma thesis. The work must have at least 30 pages (without pictures). They have one year to complete it before the work is evaluated by the Education Committee. Students then take the final diploma exams.
- Those aiming to be 'playing professionals' are given the chance to undertake the 'teaching professional' programme in parallel to their playing ambitions, though their course is one year longer and includes a spell teaching in a golf club or golf school.
- Newer topics, considered to be more important in modern education, including communications, coaching didactics, and the conjunction between muscle deficits and swing faults, are given more time.

PGA of Austria The Facts

	2000	2008
Number of facilities	108	152
Number of players	54,703	100,266
Number of PGA Members: (Trainees)	141	341
	0	80

OFFICIALS

President: **Hans-Jorg Lumpi**
 Committee Assistant: **Monika Groß**
 Chairmen of Training: **Ralph Hagen, Alexander Marx**



Austrian golf with a spectacular view at Zell am See-Kaprun – and the breathtaking Alpine panorama of the Kitzsteinhorn and Schmittenhöhe as a backdrop.

Did You Know?

- Austrian Marcus Brier is in the top 60 on the European Tour
- Natasha Fink, Nicole Gergely and Stefanie Michl are on the Ladies European Tour
- Austria won The PGAs of Europe International Team Championship at Roda, Murcia Spain, last November.
- Jonathan Mannie, now the Austrian National Coach, won a ProSport Media 5-Star Professional Award in 2006.
- The PGA of Austria was formed in 1980.